DARK HORSE COMICS
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25
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ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: BLOOD TIME
STRADLEY - NORWOOD

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: BLOOD TIME

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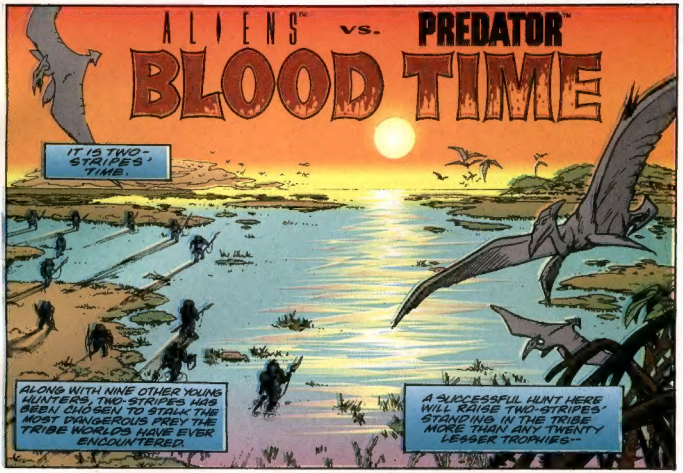

ALIENS™ vs. PREDATOR™
BLOOD TIME
IT IS TWO-STRIPES' TIME.
ALONG WITH NINE OTHER YOUNG HUNTERS, TWO-STRIPES HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO STALK THE MOST DANGEROUS PREY THE TRIBE WORLDS HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED.
A SUCCESSFUL HUNT HERE WILL RAISE TWO-STRIPES' STANDING IN THE TRIBE MORE THAN ANY TWENTY LESSER TROPHIES--

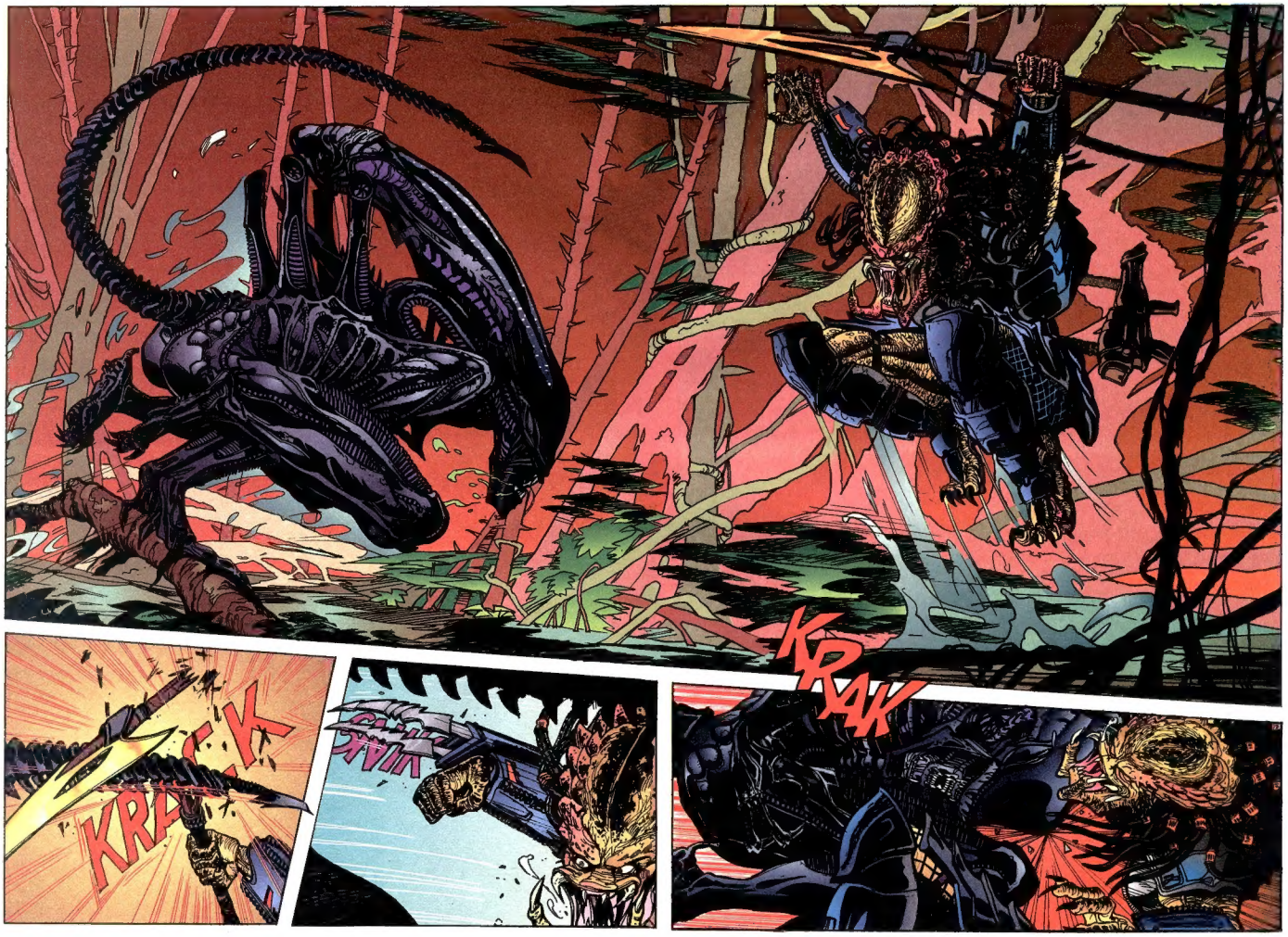
--FAILURE ON THIS HUNT ALMOST ALWAYS MEANS DEATH.
BUT, SO FAR, THE ANTICIPATION OF THE HUNT HAS FAR OUT-WEIGHED THE EXCITEMENT OF THE ACTUAL EVENT.

FOR TWO PLANET-DAYS, THE HUNTING PARTY HAS SLOGGED THROUGH THE SWAMPS, AND TWO-STRIPES SUSPECTS THAT THEIR GUIDE, OLD TOP-KNOT, HAS LOST THE TRAIL.

THEN LIGHT-STEPPER PROVES TWO-STRIPES WRONG.
K-KT-KT-T-T-T.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE FIRST SIGN WILL BRING MUCH HONOR.

TOP-KNOT IS THE LEADER. A VETERAN OF MANY HUNTS. HIS WORD IS LAW.
HUH...

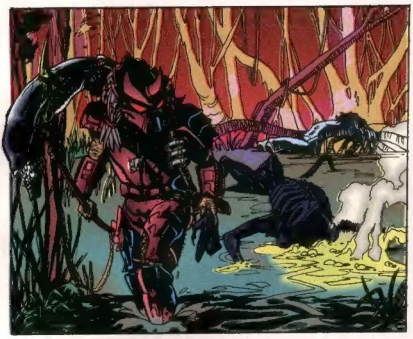

KRAK
KRAK

SLIT

SSSSSS

SSSSSSSSSSS

TWO-STRIPES KNOWS WHAT MUST BE DONE. AND TIME IS SHORT.



A SUCCESSFUL HUNT WILL RAISE TWO STRIPES STANDING IN THE TRIBE MORE THAN ANY TWENTY LESSER TROPHIES...

TOP-KNOT IS THE LEADER, A VETERAN OF MANY HUNTS. HIS WORD IS LAW.
FAILURE ON THIS HUNT ALMOST ALWAYS MEANS DEATH.
IT IS TWO-STRIPES' TIME.
The End.

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COMICS
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JAMES BOND: MINUTE OF MIDNIGHT
MOENCH - HEATH

DARK HORSE #25
COMICS

JAMES BOND: MINUTE OF MIDNIGHT

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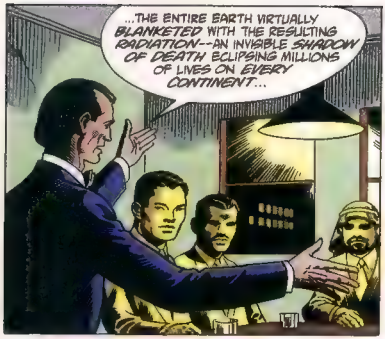
JAMES BOND 007
MINUTE TO MIDNIGHT

PART ONE: OPERATION MIASMA

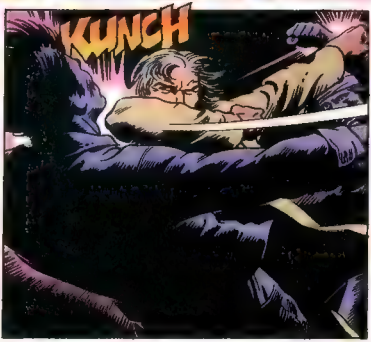
DESPITE ALL THE NUCLEAR INDUSTRY'S ASSURANCES TO THE CONTRARY, YOU SEE, THE PLAIN FACT IS THAT ATOMIC POWER PLANTS ARE ANYTHING BUT SAFE.
"THE WORLD KNOWS THIS, BUT THE WORLD PREFERS TO SLEEP--TO SEDATE ITSELF WITH DRUGS, DRINK, AND THE FANTASY VIOLENCE OF TELEVISION..."
...BUT MY PLAN WOULD AWAKEN THEM, GENTLEMEN WITH A TRULY HELLISH DOSE OF THE REAL THING.
SABOTAGE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, LEXIS? WITH ALL THE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN EFFECT, HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO DO THIS?
ALL SUCH PRECAUTIONS ARE DESIGNED TO COUNTERACT INTERNAL ACCIDENTS...NOT EXTERNAL THREAT.
BUT INFILTRATING--EVEN GETTING NEAR--SUCH PLANTS WOULD PROVE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.
TECHNOLOGY, GENTLEMEN, IS BOTH AMAZING IN ITS RAPID ADVANCE...AND READILY IN ITS POTENTIAL ABUSE.

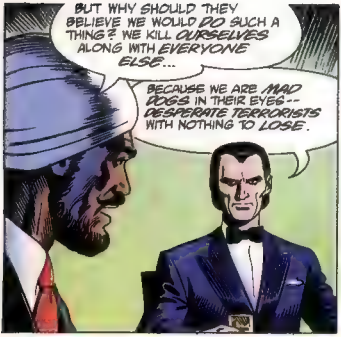
"ALL WE NEED IS SEVERAL DOZEN STRATEGICALLY POSITIONED AGENTS..."
YO--WHO SLAMMED THIS BUM ON OUR 'HOOD?
...POSITIONED, THAT IS, NEAR THE LARGEST ACTIVE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS LOCATED AROUND THE GLOBE...
"...AND, MORE PRECISELY, WITHIN THE RANGE OF SHOULDER-MOUNTED STINGER MISSILES."
CHUP
SAID YO, BUM--SCRAPE YOUR ASS OFF OUR STREET.
BUKSH
CAN YOU IMAGINE THE POWER BEHIND SUCH A BLACKMAIL THREAT--?
"THINK OF IT, GENTLEMEN--SEVERAL DOZEN NUCLEAR PLANTS SIMULTANEOUSLY SUFFERING DIRECT HITS..."
CHOOF


...THE ENTIRE EARTH VIRTUALLY BLANKETED WITH THE RESULTING RADIATION--AN INVISIBLE SHADOW OF DEATH ECLIPSING MILLIONS OF LIVES ON EVERY CONTINENT...

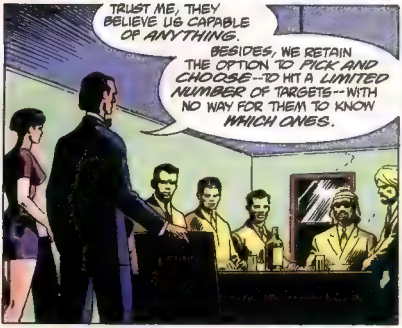
CHAT

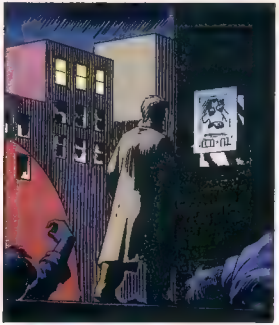
...AND MILLIONS MORE IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS TO COME--THROUGH LEUKEMIA AND HIDEOUS CANCERS.

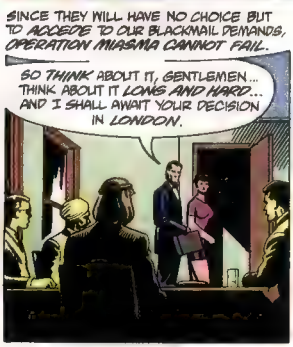

KUNCH

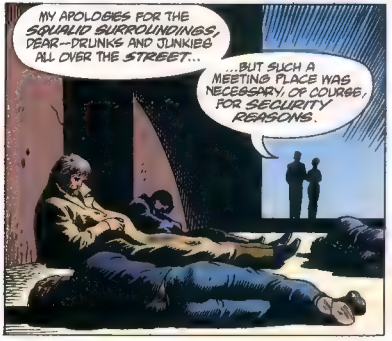

BUT WHY SHOULD THEY BELIEVE WE WOULD DO SUCH A THING? WE KILL OURSELVES ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE...
BECAUSE WE ARE MAD DOGS IN THEIR EYES--DESPERATE TERRORISTS WITH NOTHING TO LOSE.

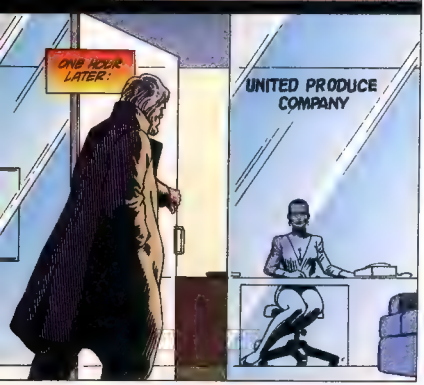
SHOKK

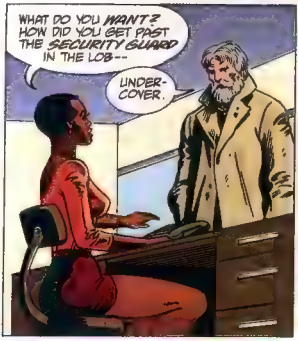

TRUST ME, THEY BELIEVE US CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.
BESIDES, WE RETAIN THE OPTION TO PICK AND CHOOSE--TO HIT A LIMITED NUMBER OF TARGETS--WITH NO WAY FOR THEM TO KNOW WHICH ONES.




SINCE THEY WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEDE TO OUR BLACKMAIL DEMANDS, OPERATION MIASMA CANNOT FAIL.
SO THINK ABOUT IT, GENTLEMEN... THINK ABOUT IT LONG AND HARD... AND I SHALL AWAIT YOUR DECISION IN LONDON.


MY APOLOGIES FOR THE SQUALID SURROUNDINGS, DEAR--DRUNKS AND JUNKIES ALL OVER THE STREET...
...BUT SUCH A MEETING PLACE WAS NECESSARY, OF COURSE, FOR SECURITY REASONS.


ONE HOUR LATER:
UNITED PRODUCE COMPANY


WHAT DO YOU WANT? HOW DID YOU GET PAST THE SECURITY GUARD IN THE LOB--
UNDER-COVER.

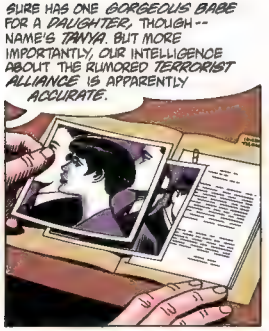
THE NAME IS BOND...

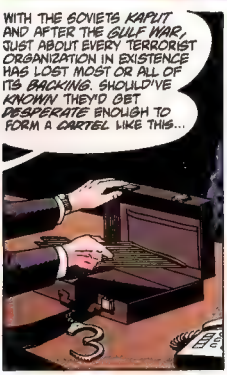
JAMES BOND.

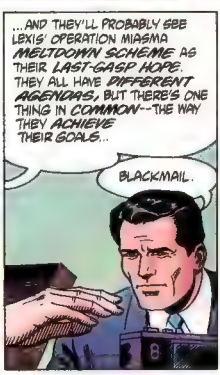
SO I SEE... AND I'M SHADOW BRIGHT.
REALLY? THEN YOUR PARENTS HAD A--
VERY GOOD TIME IN THE SIXTIES... BUT AT LEAST THEY DIDN'T NAME ME "SUNSHINE" OR "MOONBEAM."

PERHAPS WE COULD--
MR. SYKES IS WAITING FOR YOU, MR. BOND-- THIRD DOOR ON THE LEFT.
AND MORE'S THE PITY, BRIGHT SHADOW.

--AND I SHALL AWAIT YOUR DECISION IN LONDON.
WELL, BOND, YOUR LITTLE RUN-IN WITH THE STREET GANG ASIDE, THE SITUATION IS WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT.
THIS LEXIS IS A REAL MANIAC...
CLICK


SURE HAS ONE GORGEOUS BABE FOR A DAUGHTER, THOUGH--NAME'S TANYA. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, OUR INTELLIGENCE ABOUT THE RUMORED TERRORIST ALLIANCE IS APPARENTLY ACCURATE.


WITH THE SOVIETS KAPUT AND AFTER THE GULF WAR, JUST ABOUT EVERY TERRORIST ORGANIZATION IN EXISTENCE HAS LOST MOST OR ALL OF ITS BACKING. SHOULD'VE KNOWN THEY'D GET DESPERATE ENOUGH TO FORM A CARTEL LIKE THIS...


...AND THEY'LL PROBABLY SEE LEXIS' OPERATION MIASMA MELTDOWN SCHEME AS THEIR LAST-GASP HOPE. THEY ALL HAVE DIFFERENT AGENDAS, BUT THERE'S ONE THING IN COMMON--THE WAY THEY ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS...
BLACKMAIL.

RIGHT--AND IF THEY ACCEPT LEXIS' PLAN, THE WORLD WILL BE PRESENTED WITH SEVERAL DOZEN LISTS OF DEMANDS. I MADE C.I.A.'S COPY OF THE TAPE WHILE YOU PLAYED IT.

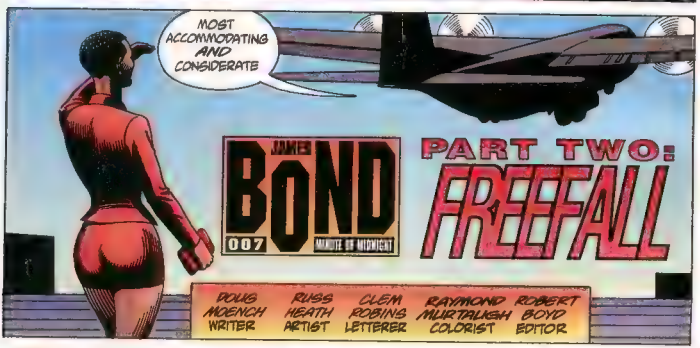
SORRY TO FURTHER INVOLVE YOU IN THIS, FRIEND, BUT LEXIS IS A BRIT CITIZEN.
WHY NOT JUST SEND IT CRYPTO, SYKES?
TOO SENSITIVE--HAND COURIER ONLY--AND SINCE YOU'RE FLYING BACK ANYWAY...

...WE'LL GIVE YOU A LIFT IN A MILITARY TRANSPORT SHIPPING OUT FOR LAKENHEATH IN THE MORNING.
CHUK
HOMEWARD BOUND.

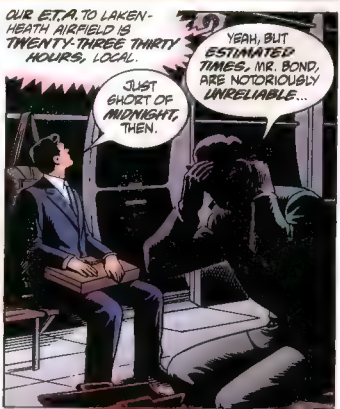
SHAKEN, SHADOW BREIGHT... NOT STIRRED.
KINKY WITH YOUR DRINKS, TOO.
NOT MY FAULT I'M SHACKLED TO MY WORK-- BLAME YOUR BOSS, HARLAN SYKES.
FIGURES...
THESE DAYS HE'S BEEN SHACKLED TO HIS WORK TOO, STAYING LATE EVERY NIGHT. MUST BE SOMETHING BIG YOU'RE WORKING ON...
BIGGER THAN YOU CAN DREAM, SHADOW...
...BUT LET'S TRY NOT TO THUMP THE BRIEFCASE THIS TIME.
MMMM...

AN AIRFIELD IN MARYLAND, FORTY MILES FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.:
JAMES BOND, THIS IS ROBERT NAGELL...
HELLO, NAGELL...
YOUR LEGEND PRECEDES YOU, MR. BOND
MR. NAGELL WILL BE YOUR C.I.A ESCORT TO BRITAIN, JAMES.
YOU'LL BE SHOWING ME ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE AIRPLANE, WILL YOU?
I AGREE IT'S RIDICULOUS, BOND, BUT SECURITY RULES...
DOESN'T IT ALWAYS.
UH, YEAH.
WELL, I'LL LET YOU TWO SAY YOUR GOOD-BYES--AND SEE YOU ABOARD FOR TAKEOFF, BOND.
HAVE A GOOD FLIGHT, JAMES--AND TO REMEMBER ME...
I DOUBT I COULD FORGET YOU, SHADOW BRIGHT...
INDEED, I BELIEVE I'VE BEEN MORE THAN SHADOWED ENOUGH.

I SEE WE WON'T BE CROWDING THE OTHER PASSENGERS, NAGELL.
YOU'RE A BIG MAN, BOND--DESERVING ALL THE LEGROOM THE COMPANY CAN PROVIDE.


MOST ACCOMMODATING AND CONSIDERATE
JAMES BOND 007
MINUTE BY MIDNIGHT
PART TWO: FREEFALL
DOUG MOENCH WRITER
RUSS HEATH ARTIST
CLEM ROBINS LETTERER
RAYMOND MURTAUGH COLORIST
ROBERT BOYD EDITOR

THIS IS YOUR PILOT, CAPT. LEWIS KOWALSKI. ON BEHALF OF MYSELF AND CO-PILOT LT. DENNIS RILEY, I'D LIKE TO WELCOME YOU ABOARD, MR. BOND...


OUR E.T.A. TO LAKENHEATH AIRFIELD IS TWENTY-THREE THIRTY HOURS, LOCAL.
JUST SHORT OF MIDNIGHT, THEN.
YEAH, BUT ESTIMATED TIMES, MR. BOND, ARE NOTORIOUSLY UNRELIABLE...

YOUR TIME, FOR EXAMPLE...
FSHH-SH
...HAS ALREADY EXPIRED.
SWEET DREAMS, BOND--TIME TO JOIN ALL THE OTHER LEGENDS.
OR TIME FOR A DEEP BREATH... AND ONE HELL OF AN ACTING JOB.
KLUNK!
:KOFF A-HUK:
WUMPT
WHAT THE--? :KOFF: G-GAS...
HAAGH-K!
AND NOW, MR. BOND, SINCE I NEED THAT BRIEFCASE...
...LET YOU GIVE ME A HAND...

SWUKK
WILL A FIST DO?
KLUNK
AND BY THE WAY, NAGELL, OLD CHAP...
:-KOFF A-HAGH-K:
SHUFF
...THANKS AGAIN FOR ALL THE LEG-ROOM.
CHUT

:HAUUUGH:
KLATCH
SWUMP
THE CHUTE--THE OTHER STRAP!

YES! FINALLY GOT THE DAMN--
UHN!
AGHK!
YAAA

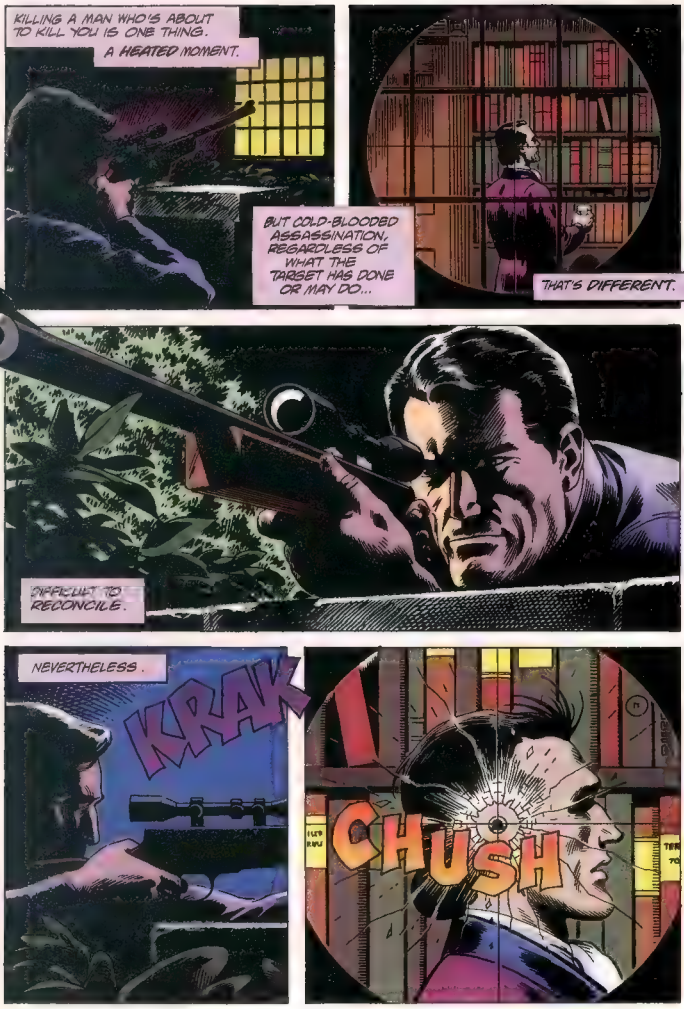
FWUP
AT LEAST THE PLANE'S IN A SPIRAL DIVE--BUT IT'S GOING DOWN FAST. AT BEST, THE CHUTE GETS ME INTO POSITION...
AND THEN..
...I'M ON MY OWN FOR THE REST.
GETTING TOO CLOSE TO THE WATER--ONLY ONE SHOT AT IT...
KLOOSH

KWUMPT
BOND TO LAKENHEATH: ESTIMATED ARRIVAL...
...ON TIME...

JAMES BOND 007
MINUTE OF MIDNIGHT
PART THREE:
BUSINESS AT HAND
LAKENHEATH AIRFIELD:
LOOKING FOR THIS?
NIGEL REDDITCH, ISN'T IT?
211
8131
YOUR POWERS OF OBSERVATION ARE FABLED, MR. BOND.
HOW'S BILL?
TANNER IS TANNER --YOUR FRIEND, MY BOSS.
HE SAYS THE C.I.A. "HAS ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF EVERYTHING EXCEPT LEXIS HIMSELF."
KLTCH

AND, LUCKY YOU, I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM M, AS WELL...
"THE BIRD'S SONG ENDED."
I SEE.
YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE LICENSE, OLD CHAP --AND YOU ARE NOW OFFICIALLY UNLEASHED.
CHAK
AS FOR ME...?
LET'S JUST SAY...
AT TIMES LIKE THIS, I RELISH BEING A MERE DESK-HOUND.
TLINK
ENJOY YOUR FIREWORKS, MR. BOND.
NEVER.

THE LEXIS ESTATE, OUTSIDE LONDON.
NIGHTBIRDS.
NOTHING ELSE.
K-CHAKT
AND NOW, AS IF ON M'S PRESCIENT COMMAND ...EVEN THE NIGHTBIRDS FALL SILENT.


KILLING A MAN WHO'S ABOUT TO KILL YOU IS ONE THING.
A HEATED MOMENT.
BUT COLD-BLOODED ASSASSINATION, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE TARGET HAS DONE OR MAY DO...
THAT'S DIFFERENT.
DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE.
NEVERTHELESS.
KRAK
CHUSH

PLUKSH
...ONE MUST BE PROFESSIONAL.

LICENSE TO KILL.

PERMISSION TO MURDER.

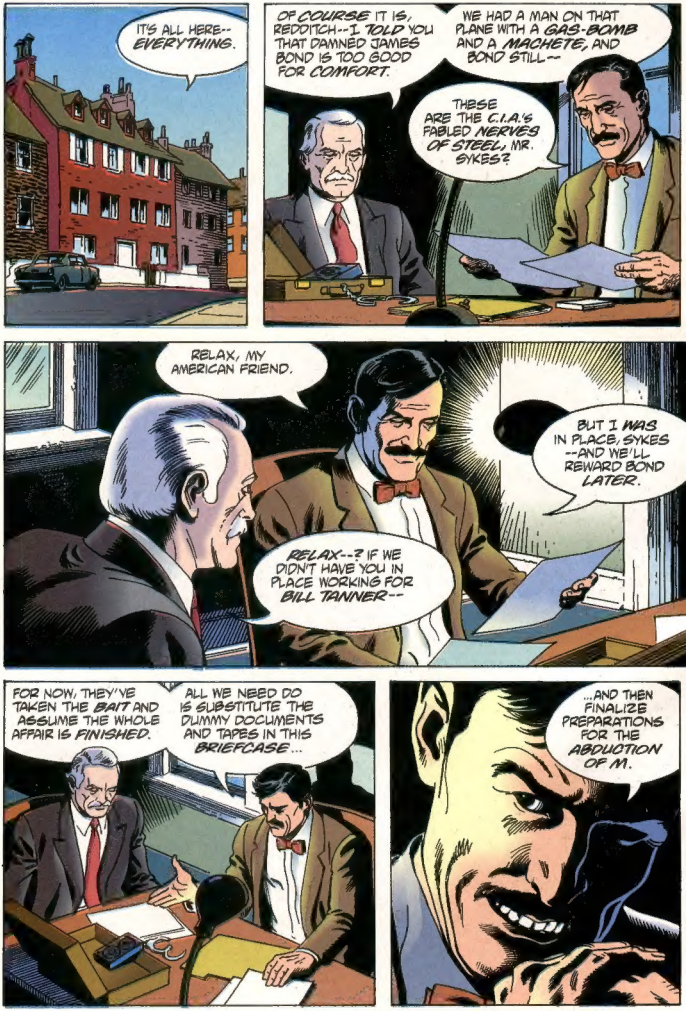
TICKET TO HELL.

AAAAIEEEEE

THE SCREAM WILL LIVE FOREVER IN THE MIND...

...THE CRAZED CRY OF A NIGHTBIRD WHOSE SONG WILL NEVER END.

DIRTY BUSINESS, JAMES...
...BUT THE C.I.A. HAD ALREADY DONE THE LION'S SHARE OF THE OPERATION.
WE HAD TO CLEAN UP OUR END HERE IN LONDON.
I KNOW, BUT...
JUST THINK OF THE SHADOW THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN CAST BY LEXIS' RADIATION CLOUD.
AT THE MOMENT I'D RATHER NOT, BILL.
ALL RIGHT, JAMES, I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL.
M'S STILL IN FRANCE FOR THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE, BUT HE SAYS TO TAKE A WEEK OFF.
THANKS, BILL.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.
FILTHY BUSINESS WE'RE IN...
...AND GOD HELP US.


IT'S ALL HERE--EVERYTHING.
OF COURSE IT IS, REDDITCH--I TOLD YOU THAT DAMNED JAMES BOND IS TOO GOOD FOR COMFORT.
WE HAD A MAN ON THAT PLANE WITH A GAS-BOMB AND A MACHETE, AND BOND STILL--
THESE ARE THE C.I.A.'S FABLED NERVES OF STEEL, MR. SYKES?
RELAX, MY AMERICAN FRIEND.
BUT I WAS IN PLACE, SYKES --AND WE'LL REWARD BOND LATER.
RELAX--? IF WE DIDN'T HAVE YOU IN PLACE WORKING FOR BILL TANNER--
FOR NOW, THEY'VE TAKEN THE BAIT AND ASSUME THE WHOLE AFFAIR IS FINISHED.
ALL WE NEED DO IS SUBSTITUTE THE DUMMY DOCUMENTS AND TAPES IN THIS BRIEFCASE...
...AND THEN FINALIZE PREPARATIONS FOR THE ABDUCTION OF M.

SCANNED BY - COYOTE